

**Expression of Interest for Provision of Licensing and Support of “Open Accounts and eBis Finance Management Software” Product Suite.**

**Introduction**

Together Housing Association Limited (THA) is a charitable housing association registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefits Societies Act 2014 and is the parent company to a number of subsidiaries. The main subsidiary being Together Housing Association (THA), which is where the social housing stock is owned and managed. THA manages over 38,000 properties, providing a comprehensive range of support services which affect over 80,000 people’s lives over a huge geographical area in the North of England. Employing approximately 1,500 staff, the Group’s corporate vision is to be ‘A groundbreaking Company, building homes, communities and futures. For future information please visit [www.togetherhousing.co.uk](http://www.togetherhousing.co.uk)

**Expression of Interest Purpose**

This Expression of Interest exercise is intended to:

* Engage with the market to understand the support capabilities for our requirement.
* Develop an understanding of suitably qualified and capable support providers for the Open Accounts and eBis Finance Management Software Product Suite.
* Develop a wider understanding of available Procurement Routes and Routes to Market.
* Develop an understanding of what information that market would require from Together Housing for any Future Procurement exercise.

**Requirements**

This is a call for Expressions of Interest (“EOI”) pertaining to an intended procurement exercise by THA.

Together Housing (“THA”) is seeking a suitably qualified and capable provider to provide licensing and support for its embedded “Open Accounts” and eBis Software System. Such system has historically been provided by Orchard Information Systems Limited, and is utilised across the Finance and Accountancy functions of THA.

This document is not, at this stage, a call for competition. Together Housing is instead seeking to utilise Early Engagement and Expressions of Interest to build an understanding of the capability within the market for meeting its requirement, and to assess the benefits of competition for this requirement.

Open Accounts and eBis (together “the Solution” within this document) is utilised as the primary software solution for Finance, Accountancy and Accounts Payable functions across THA. The Solution is at present utilised by approximately 40 users (for Open Accounts), and 550 across the eBis e-Finance software packages. This further extends to non-finance users, for the raising, authorisation and processing of purchase orders and payments. The solution is currently hosted on Together Housing Digital Infrastructure.

The modules currently employed or in use across the Solution are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Products** | **Modules** |
| Core Financials | Accounts Receivable |
| Users: 40 | Accounts Payable |
|  | General Ledger |
|  | Company Accounts |
|  | Cash & Bank |
|  | Budgeting |
|  | Management Accounts |
|  | Corporate Accounts |
|  | Sales Invoicing |
|  | Invoice Register |
|  | Sundry Payments |
|  | Fixed Assets |
|  | Commitments |
|  | Construction Industry Scheme |
|  |  |
| Project Accounting | Project Ledger |
| Users:40 | Project Report Writer |
|  | Project Budgeting |
|  | Project Billing |
|  | Project Resources |
|  | Corporate Project Reporting |
|  |  |
| Procurement |  |
| Users:24 |  |
|  |  |
| EDR Financial Reporting |  |
| Users:40 |  |
|  |  |
| Functions | User |
|  | None |
|  | Public Service Pack |
|  | Fixed Asset Tax Reporting |
|  | GL Transaction Matching |
|  | Multiple Sessions |
|  | Explorer Style Menu |
|  | Paperclip |
|  | AR Bulk Allocation |
|  | Save Report/Enquiry Parameters |
|  | Payment Plan |
|  | User Defined Fields |
|  | eProcurement Plus |
|  | Asset Component Accounting |
|  | Forensix Reporting |
|  |  |
| EDR Open Reporting |  |
| Users:40 |  |
|  |  |
| EDR Data Map |  |
| No. of DB's:3 |  |
|  |  |

The Solution itself is integrated through bespoke integrations with software solutions such as Aareon QL, Documotive, and Bottomline, as well as importing/exporting data through BACS. Furthermore, the solution is also integrated with bespoke programs that require continued support, listed within the table below:

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| **Bespoke Program** | **Description** |
| Cashflow Report | Extracts cash movement analysis and analysis by GL Codes including Analysis Codes |
| VAT Report | Non-Recoverable VAT Analysis |
| Live to Test Copy Script | Provides inhouse ability to carry out this function |
| Program Allocation | Users with access to specific program |
| Import User GL Security | Imports for many users security ranges |

Such solution is utilised across Together Housing in the performance and delivery of its Finance operation and obligations, included compliance with Financial legislation and HMRC regulations.

In regards to the provision of Support, Together Housing requires the provision of support to be conducted, including the processing or viewing of any Personal Data, to be conducted within the United Kingdom (if not within the European Economic Area).

The current support provision for the Solution, including support and licensing for all relevant software packages, integrations and programs, is set to expire on the 30th of May 2024. Together Housing thus intends, following this Market Engagement and Expression of Interest exercise, to conduct a procurement exercise for the award of a multi-year contract.

The Solution is deeply ingrained within THA operations, and strategic review of the benefits of review and implementation of an alternative Finance solution has indicated that, at present, the operational, commercial and delivery risks associated far outweigh the potential benefits of replacement of the current software solution.

This is compounded by the planned Digital Transformation, arising from the wider Digital Strategy of the organisation (due for ratification and agreement in 2024), which will see a large-scale digital transformation – including in relation to Finance Software – within the next 3 to 4 years.

Therefore, at this time and for the purposes of this exercise, Together Housing is seeking only to identify suitably capable, licensed and qualified suppliers, who can license and support the existing Open Accounts and eBis solution, and is not seeking alternative products or software arrangements.

It is Together Housing’s intention, following this Market Engagement exercise and subsequent procurement and award, to conduct a full finance system tender exercise prior to the expiration of this contract, to support the wider Digital Transformation aims and modernisation of its IT and Finance solutions and processes.

This Expression of Interest Exercise is thus intended to develop a further understanding of the Market Capability pertaining to support of the Open Accounts and eBis Finance Management Software, and identify suitably capable and qualified suppliers who may meet Together Housings requirements.

Such Expression of Interest exercise is intended to inform Together Housing’s Planned Procurement Activity, and response in no way constitutes any form of agreement or assurance from Together Housing regarding the development of its procurement process or selection of Procurement “Route to market” for this provision*.*

**Expression of Interest – Timeline and Requirements**

The timeline for responses of this Expression of Interest Exercise are as follows:

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| Issuing of the EOI  | Friday the 23rd of February 2024  |
| Deadline for Responses  | 5pm (17:00) on Friday the 15th of March 2024 |

Prospective organisations who wish to express their interest must ensure that they have completed and returned the document, with all questions completed and responded to with the document, in advance of the EOI Closure deadline.

All responses to this EOI should be sent to THG.Procurement@togetherhousing.co.uk, with the email subject “THG Open Accounts EOI response”.

Responses received after this deadline may not be considered or accounted for by Together Housing.

Please be advised that any additional documentation, unless requested as part of the question set within this EOI document, shall not be considered or reviewed by Together Housing.

**Requirements of a Capable Supplier**

Together Housing is seeking to identify suitably capable and qualified suppliers to meet the requirements set out below:

* Capable to provide the relevant licensing for continued use of the Open Accounts and eBis solution (for example through reseller or partnership arrangement).
* Proven capability in supporting the product suite for Public sector and Social Housing customers (through evidence-based case study), including through portal-based web support for user queries.
* Proven capability in supporting bespoke programs and integrations with other software products
* Proven and demonstrable capability in meeting and performance of support, through clearly defined and equitable Service Levels and Service Level Agreements.
* Clear understanding of capabilities and generating continuous improvement within both the wider Finance software market and for the required software products, such as through evidencing of guidance and support on bespoke or additional configuration and integrated functionality.
* Capable of providing support, where handling THA data or requiring access to THA systems, through UK (if not EEA) support resource functions.

**Together Housing Open Accounts/eBis Finance Management EOI – Questions for Response**

Please ensure that you have responded to all questions included within the section below as part of your response to this Expression of Interest exercise.

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| Question 1 | Based on the current specification, do you believe that the market would provide a suitably capable response to Together Housing’s requirements, if and when a procurement exercise was conducted? |
| Answer |  |

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| Question 2 | How is your organisation able to support Together Housing’s Open Accounts and eBis system? For example, through reseller or partnership arrangement, premium support partner, direct ownership, etc.Please also outline and evidence how you are able to access the relevant source code required for technical or coding (config) support |
| Answer |  |

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| Question 3 | Please outline and evidence a previous use case or case study where you have provided support for a customer’s Open accounts/eBis solution, and any benefits materialised through this contract  |
| Answer |  |

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| Question 4 | Please outline how your organisation is capable of providing upgrades, development, and planned maintenance across the Open Accounts/eBis software estate. This should include information on how the configuration and development is sourced, implemented, and managed.  |
| Answer |  |

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| Question 5 | Please outline how your organisation ensures staff are suitably qualified and trained to support the solution defined within the specification.  |
| Answer |  |

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| Question 6 | Is your organisation capable of providing support and licensing (and thus, in turn, viewing and processing of any personal data in providing such support) from within the UK (if not EEA)? If so, please outline and demonstrate how your organisation is capable of providing support from within this geographic area.  |
| Answer |  |

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| Question 7 | Please outline the capability of your organisation to support the bespoke programs currently in place on our Open Accounts/eBis solution, or to provide immediately available functionality to replace/upgrade these bespoke programs.  |
| Answer |  |

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| Question 8 | Would Together Housing achieve any tangible benefit (or detriment) through consolidating the requirement into a single contract, rather than through split procurement exercises?  |
| Answer |  |

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| Question 9 | Is there any information missing, insufficiently defined, or that would benefit from further elaboration, included within the current version of Together Housing’s specification? |
| Answer |  |

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| Question 10 | Based on the modules and requirements listed above, how much would an indicative support charge (and licensing) per annum be?  |
| Answer |  |

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| Question 11 | What public sector procurement frameworks is your organisation registered under, if any?  |
| Answer |  |

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| Question 12 | Is there any other information that your organisation wishes to make Together Housing aware of in relation to this specification and EOI exercise?  |
| Answer |  |